

chapter 7

POLICES AND STRATEGIES

Setting the Course

A BRIEF "HOW-TO" FOR ESTABLISHING POLICIES

A policy is a specific statement of principle or course of action. Whereas a “goal” is an end result for which the community is striving, a policy is a statement concerning how to reach that goal. For example, it may be a goal to sustain the capacity of Route 321, free of congestion. To try to meet that goal, a community might adopt policies such as, “The Town shall limit the number of new driveways along Route 321”; and “The Town shall designate the eastern end of Route 321 for economic development, while reserving the western end for rural land uses.”

Communities will customize policies to meet their needs, but here are some guidelines on how policies should be structured:

Guideline 1: To the greatest extent possible, policies should be “directive.” They should be an instruction to those who will be implementing the plan. Directive policies include the word “must” or “shall” or are presented as an imperative sentence. “The Town shall require sidewalks as part of subdivisions,” or “Extend Miller Road to open up land for a new industrial park” are examples of policies that direct or instruct. Not all policies are directive; some may be suggestions or general guidelines. These use “permissive” words like “should” or “encourage.” However, to be consistent with Maine’s STPA (and the companion Growth Management Act), most policies should be directive.

Guideline 2: Policies should be linked to issues that arise from inventories and analyses. For example, the inventory and analysis may have found that current land use patterns are not compatible with providing choice in transportation, because they don’t allow certain activities within walking distance of homes. Having made that finding, there should be a policy to address it, such as, “The Town’s land use ordinance shall be amended to allow for neighborhood business districts within one-half mile of residential areas.”

Guideline 3: Policies should be specific enough that there isn’t confusion about the direction the Town should take. A poorly written policy sometimes sounds like a restatement of the goal, offering no real direction for those who will be trying to implement the policy. For example, in striving to meet the goal of maintaining the capacity of a state highway to move people and freight, a policy statement such

as, “The Town should take steps to keep Route 321 free of congestion” isn’t very helpful. The committee may not have the expertise to spell out all the steps, nor does a policy statement have to be very detailed. But it should give firm direction, such as “To preserve the capacity of Route 321 while still allowing roadside development along it, the Town shall limit new driveways to one per lot of record.”

Guideline 4: Policies should be realistic. There should be some prospect of being able to carry out a stated policy. For example, a policy in a small town that says, “Implement a year-round local bus system to serve the village area” may be financially impossible. Alternatively, a policy that says, “Establish a rural feeder to the Service Center bus system” may be within the realm of possibility.

Guideline 5: Policies should not contradict each other. The transportation chapter of a comprehensive plan is tightly connected with other chapters of the plan, including, of course, the chapter on land use. It is easy to adopt policies in one chapter that are inconsistent with policies in another. For example, if the transportation chapter establishes a policy to “Introduce bus service in the community within five years,” but the land use policies don’t endorse land use densities greater than, say, one home per acre, there is a serious inconsistency: one-acre densities can never support bus service. Inconsistencies need to be resolved before signing off on the plan.

Guideline 6: Local policies should be consistent with state and regional policies. Every community is part of a region, and many are part of what MaineDOT has identified as [“corridors of regional economic significance for transportation”](#) (CREST). The Department, assisted by regional councils, is trying to balance a region’s growth objectives with the need to preserve the capacity of corridors to move people and goods through the region. Consult with your regional council to assure your local policies are consistent with – and helping to promote – the policies of the region of which the community is a part.

Policies can be constructed at different levels of detail. Sometimes the term “policy” is reserved for high-level statements of intent, while more detailed versions are called “strategies,” which are akin to actions to be taken to implement the higher level policy. But do not worry about these distinctions. Policy statements that meet the guidelines above will suffice at any level of detail.

WHAT THE STPA REQUIRES

Minimum required policies: The [STPA rule](#) requires that each community transportation plan at a minimum adopt policies in five areas:

- **Safe and efficient preservation or improvement of the transportation system**

This policy is aimed at preventing the overburdening of state and local roads through good design and wise investments. A community may choose to adopt a broader range of policies relating to preserving and improving

their transportation system. The menu of strategies presented in Appendix B provides a head start for thinking through approaches to implement this policy. See especially the strategies under the headings “strategies to relieve or prevent congestion and preserve mobility” and “strategies to protect and get the most out of regional transportation facilities.”

- **Prioritized needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems**

This simply means that each community must identify which of its transportation needs are the highest priority, so that those implementing the plan have clear direction.

- **Promotion of public health, protection of natural and cultural resources, and enhanced livability**

This policy focuses on quality of life that transportation decisions either can enhance or compromise. There are two overall goals embedded in this policy: (1) minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled, thus reducing future burdens on the state and local road system and, in the process, creating more opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, and (2) preserve physical, natural, and scenic features that are of particular value to the workings of the environment and to the identity and enjoyment of the community. In Appendix B, the menu of strategies organized under the headings “strategies to enhance the form and pattern of development for optimal use of the transportation system” and “strategies to maintain quality of place” will be helpful in thinking through policies relevant to your community and region.

- **Meeting the diverse transportation needs of both residents — including children, the elderly and people with disabilities — and through-travelers by providing choice in transportation**

This policy addresses alternative modes of transportation and the land use conditions that can help make alternatives to single-occupancy auto travel possible. In Appendix B, the menu of strategies organized under “strategies to introduce or expand modes of passenger transportation” will provide a starting point.

- **Fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network**

To the extent that this policy helps prevent the premature depreciation of the state’s highway network – for example, by prescribing and enforcing good land use management and access management along the highways – it overlaps with policies in other categories above. To the extent that these policies include fiscal actions to help pay for the management and upgrading of the transportation system, such as using local impact fees or preparing a capital investment plan, these are discussed in Chapter 8, Implementing the Transportation Plan.

Minimum required strategies: In addition, the STPA requires community transportation plans to include statements of strategy that reflect at least the following six items:

- **Develop or continue to update a prioritized ten-year improvement, maintenance and repair plan for local/regional transportation system facilities that reflects community, regional and state objectives.**
Many communities develop local capital investment plans or capital improvement programs that include their anticipated expenditures on local roads and bridges or to fund the local match associated with a planned state investment. This strategy requires a community to consult regional transportation plans and build their transportation investment framework with consideration of overall regional objectives.
- **Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation and land use planning efforts.**
A community might implement this strategy by participating in a regional corridor study or by appointing a local resident to follow and participate in one of MaineDOT's long range planning processes.
- **Enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to be consistent with local, regional and state transportation policies identified in this plan.**
This strategy refers to land use standards that affect transportation facilities. For example, a community may zone an area near an airport or rail line as residential, which will compete with the operational needs of those facilities and create a situation in which residents view the facilities as nuisances. Or a town may require large lot sizes not conducive to walking or transit, thereby assuring excessive trips on a roadway.
- **Enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with the following three state statutes:**
 1. Policy objectives of the [Sensible Transportation Policy Act \(23 MRSA §73\)](#);
 2. State access management regulations pursuant to [23 MRSA §704—Entrances to highways regulated](#); and
 3. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to [23 MRSA §704-A - Traffic movement permit](#).

For addressing or avoiding conflicts with the STPA policy objectives, access management regulations and traffic permitting regulations, make use of the incentive based strategies identified in Table 2-I of Chapter 2, the 4-D guidelines in Chapter 3, and the benchmarks in Table 5-I of Chapter 5, as well as the strategies outlined in Appendices A and B. Several model land use ordinances are available from the State Planning Office, including [How to Write a Land Use Ordinance](#), [Site Plan Review Handbook](#), [Model Subdivision Regulations](#), and [Performance Standards for Large-Scale Development](#).

- **Enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.**
Requiring interconnected streets, providing infrastructure for pedestrians, and requiring new large-scale commercial uses to provide for transit stops are examples of how a community might amend its subdivision and site plan ordinances.
- **Work with the MaineDOT as appropriate to address deficiencies in the system or conflicts between local, regional and state priorities for the local transportation system.**
If conflicts or issues are identified during the planning process, assign responsibility for coordinating with MaineDOT and your regional council to the most appropriate entity (Road Commissioner, Select Board, Historic or Conservation Commission, etc.)

MENU OF STRATEGIES (TURNING POLICY INTO ACTION)

In **Appendix A**, you will find a sample of transportation and transportation-related land use issues that are common to many communities in Maine. For each of the issues, a menu of strategies is introduced, some of which may work for your community. The strategies are then explained in more detail in **Appendix B**.

Consider these strategies to be a starting point. Your community may arrive at other strategies to meet its specific needs. For reference, the strategies are organized into the following parts:

Part 1. Strategies to relieve or prevent congestion and preserve mobility

- 1.1 Contain development within well-defined growth area boundaries
- 1.2 Limit the number of new driveways onto major collectors and arterials
- 1.3 Retrofit the number, location, and design of existing driveways
- 1.4 Provide for alternate routing of traffic
- 1.5 Interconnect the local street system
- 1.6 Institute turning controls
- 1.7 Improve wayfinding
- 1.8 Work toward jobs-housing balance

Part 2. Strategies to enhance the form and pattern of development for optimal use of the transportation system

- 2.1 Diversify allowed land uses
- 2.2 Locate residences and uses needed by neighborhood residents, such as elementary schools and stores with convenience goods and services, close to each other
- 2.3 Increase density of development to expand transportation opportunities
- 2.4 Create a community sanitary district for subsurface wastewater disposal

- 2.5 Prepare and adopt an “official map” for streets and other public improvements
- 2.6 Modify use, supply, and location of public parking in village centers and downtowns
- 2.7 Evaluate standards for single-parcel off-street parking
- 2.8 Locate public buildings to meet LEED siting criteria

Part 3. Strategies to introduce or expand modes of passenger transportation

- 3.1 Extend and connect the pedestrian network of sidewalks and cross-walks
- 3.2 Provide for bicycle lanes
- 3.3 Introduce or expand ride sharing
- 3.4 Introduce or expand demand-response transit service
- 3.5 Introduce or expand fixed-route bus service
- 3.6 Prepare for passenger rail service

Part 4. Strategies to protect and get the most out of regional transportation facilities

- 4.1 Anticipate regional transportation needs for an undeveloped or new growth area
- 4.2 Allow for unimpeded operation and expansion of regional transportation facilities
- 4.3 Upgrade connectivity between industrial areas and regional transportation facilities

Part 5. Strategies to maintain quality of place

- 5.1 Design or retrofit streets for human scale
- 5.2 Retrofit streets and highways using flexible, “context sensitive” design
- 5.3 Institute traffic calming measures
- 5.4 Conduct a safety audit
- 5.5 Adopt performance standards, including for signs, parking, internal circulation and landscaping, for highway-oriented development
- 5.6 Conduct a visual assessment and adopt view corridor standards
- 5.7 Incorporate best management practices for erosion control and storm water management into subdivision and site plan review ordinances
- 5.8 Assure proper design of culverts for streams with fish populations

Another category of strategies – **financial** – is discussed in Chapter 8, Implementation.